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TELEGRAM INFORMATION REPORT TELEGRAM

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

CLASSIFICATION — DISSEMINATION CONTROLS

CONFIDENTIAL NO FOREIGN DISSEM/NO DISSEM ABROAD BACKGROUND USE ONLY

COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

REPORT NO. TDCS DB-3/656,842

SUBJECT 1. NGO DINH NHU INTENTION TO DEAL WITH VC
2. ATTEMPTS OF PHAM NGOC THAO TO ARRANGE AIR FORCE SUPPORT FOR A COUP D'ETAT

DATE DISTR. 24 SEPTEMBER 1963

PRECEDENCE ROUTINE

DATE OF INFO. 9-20 SEPTEMBER 1963

REFERENCES IN 26062

PLACE & DATE ACQ. VIETNAM, SAIGON (22 SEPTEMBER 1963)

APPRAISAL SEE BELOW

FIELD REPORT NO. FVS 9684

THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION. SOURCE GRADINGS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

SOURCE A FIELD GRADE VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE OFFICER (F).

APPR: IT IS PROBABLY TRUE THAT THAO HAS PLANNED A COUP AND HAS SOUGHT VNAF SUPPORT AS REPORTED. THE SUBSTANCE OF THAO'S TALKS WITH DIEM AND NHU CONCERNING NHU'S CONTACTS WITH THE VIET CONG AND NHU'S PLANS FOR MAJOR CHANGES IN THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ECONOMY CANNOT BE ACCURATELY JUDGED. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT NHU WOULD MAKE A DEAL WITH THE COMMUNISTS ALTHOUGH THAO IS APPARENTLY CONVINCED THAT NHU IS CONSIDERING SUCH ACTION. IT IS NOT TRUE THAT AMBASSADOR LODGE TALKED WITH THAO

1. SUMMARY. ON 20 SEPTEMBER 1963 LIEUTENANT COLONEL PHAM NGOC THAO, ASSIGNED TO THE PRESIDENCY AS AN INSPECTOR FOR THE STRATEGIC HAMLET PROGRAM, SAID THAT HE HAD TALKED SEPARATELY WITH PRESIDENT DIEM AND NGO DINH NHU ABOUT NHU'S CONTACTS WITH THE VIET CONG (VC) AND THAT NHU HAD ADMITTED THAT HE WAS "CONSIDERING DEALING WITH THE COMMUNISTS." THAO CLAIMED THAT NHU WAS PLANNING MAJOR CHANGES TO MAKE THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ECONOMY MORE SIMILAR TO THE ECONOMIES OF COMMUNIST NATIONS. THAO HAS SOLICITED VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE (VNAF) SUPPORT FOR A COUP D'ETAT AGAINST THE DIEM REGIME.

CLASSIFICATION — DISSEMINATION CONTROLS

CONFIDENTIAL NO FOREIGN DISSEM/NO DISSEM ABROAD BACKGROUND USE ONLY

GROUP 1 Excluded from automatic downgrading and declassification

STATE/INR	DIA	ARMY/ACSI	NAVY	AIR	JCS	SECDEF	NSA	NIC	XXXXXXXX	OCI	ONE	OCR	XXXXXXXXXXX	EXO
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TELEGRAM INFORMATION REPORT TELEGRAM

THAO SAID THAT NHU'S PLANS TO DEAL WITH THE COMMUNISTS MUST BE FORESTALLED.

2. THAO SAID THAT DURING THE WEEK 9-15 SEPTEMBER PRESIDENT DIEM SUMMONED HIM AND ASKED HIM HOW HE, DIEM, WAS REGARDED BY THE PEOPLE. THAO REPLIED THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS STILL PERSONALLY POPULAR BUT THAT THE PEOPLE DISLIKED NHU BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED THAT NHU WAS IN CONTACT WITH THE VC. THAO SAID THAT DIEM WAS ANGERED AND DEMANDED TO KNOW WHO HAD TOLD THAO THIS INFORMATION. THAO REPLIED THAT THIS OPINION WAS COMMONLY HELD BY CIVIL SERVANTS, THE GENERAL PUBLIC, AND THE AMERICANS.

3. ON 16 SEPTEMBER NHU SUMMONED THAO AND ASKED HIM WHY HE HAD TOLD THE PRESIDENT OF NHU'S CONTACTS WITH THE VC. THAO BELIEVED THAT NHU HIMSELF HAD TOLD AMERICAN AMBASSADOR LODGE AND THAT LODGE HAD SUBSEQUENTLY INFORMED THAO. NHU CALMED DOWN AND LATER IN THE INTERVIEW ADMITTED THAT HE HAD BEEN "CONSIDERING DEALING WITH THE COMMUNISTS." THAO CLAIMED THAT HE TOLD NHU THAT NHU DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE COMMUNISTS AND THAT HE WOULD BE PLAYING A DANGEROUS GAME IN DEALING WITH THEM. (FIELD COMMENT. AMBASSADOR LODGE HAS NEVER MET THAO.)

4. THAO SAID THAT NHU PLANNED TO MAKE MAJOR CHANGES DURING THE COMING MONTHS, INCLUDING THE NATIONALIZATION OF BANKS AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISES, WHICH THAO SAID, WOULD MAKE SOUTH VIETNAM'S ECONOMY MORE SIMILAR TO ECONOMIES OF COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. (FIELD

COMMENT. THAO DID NOT STATE THE SOURCE OF HIS INFORMATION CONCERNING NHU'S PLANS.) ACCORDING TO THAO, NHU'S CONTACT WITH THE COMMUNISTS WAS VIA THE POLISH DELEGATION TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONTROL COMMISSION. THAO SAID THAT NHU'S PLAN TO DEAL WITH THE COMMUNISTS MUST BE FORESTALLED.

5. ON 2Ø SEPTEMBER 1963 THAO SPOKE TO A RANKING VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE (VNAF) OFFICER CONCERNING THE POSSIBILITY OF THE VNAF SUPPORTING A COUP D'ETAT AGAINST THE DIEM REGIME. THAO SAID THAT:

A. THE VNAF WOULD NOT BE INVOLVED IN ANY FIGHTING BECAUSE RESISTANCE BY GOVERNMENT FORCES WOULD BE OVERCOME IN THREE HOURS.

B. THE COUP LEADERS WANTED THE VNAF TO HINDER OR STOP THE FORCES OF BRIGADIER GENERAL HUYNH VAN CAO, IV CORPS COMMANDER FROM ASSISTING FORCES LOYAL TO THE DIEM REGIME.

6. THAO WANTED VNAF SUPPORT TO STOP CAO ALTHOUGH HE BELIEVED THAT CAO MIGHT NOT NOW SUPPORT THE PRESIDENT AS STRONGLY AS IN THE PAST. HE GAVE THE FOLLOWING REASONS FOR THIS JUDGEMENT:

A. CAO DID NOT ESTABLISH MARTIAL LAW IN THE IV CORPS AFTER THE PROCLAMATION ESTABLISHING MARTIAL LAW IN THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY ON 21 AUGUST.

B. RECENTLY, CAO HAS KEPT HIS TROOPS HEAVILY COMMITTED IN OPERATIONS AGAINST THE VC.

C. CAO APPEARED TO BE REMAINING ALOOF FROM EVENTS IN SAIGON.

D. CAO HAS MADE REPEATED REQUESTS TO THAO TO VISIT HIM AND

HAS OFFERED HIS PRIVATE AIRCRAFT TO THAO FOR SUCH A VISIT.

7. THE VNAF OFFICER WHOM THAO APPROACHED REPLIED THAT COLONEL HUYNH HUU HIEN, VNAF COMMANDER, WAS COMPLETELY LOYAL TO THE REGIME AND, PARTICULARLY, TO NGO DINH NHU. HE ALSO TOLD THAO THAT IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WHAT ACTION VNAF OFFICERS WOULD TAKE IN THE EVENT OF A COUP. THAO REPLIED THAT IF HIEN FAILED TO COOPERATE, HE COULD EASILY BE KILLED.

8. FIELD DISSEM. STATE (AMBASSADOR LODGE) USMACV (GENERAL HARKINS) CINCPAC PACFLT ARPAC PACAF.

END OF MESSAGE